

Mumps Information

What causes mumps?

Mumps is caused by a virus.

How does mumps spread?

Mumps spreads from person to person through the air. It is less contagious than measles or chickenpox.

How long does it take to show signs of mumps after being exposed?

The incubation period of mumps is 14-18 days, but can range from 14-25 days.

What are the symptoms of mumps?

Individuals with mumps usually first feel sick with nonspecific symptoms, such as headache, loss of appetite, and low-grade fever.

The most well-known sign of mumps is "parotitis," the swelling of the salivary glands, or parotid glands, below the ear. Parotitis occurs only in 30%-40% of individuals infected with mumps.

Up to 20% of persons with mumps have no symptoms of disease, and another 40%-50% have only nonspecific or respiratory symptoms.

How serious is mumps?

In children, mumps is usually a mild disease. Adults may have more serious disease and more complications.

What are possible complications from mumps?

Central nervous system involvement (meningitis) is common, but is usually not serious. Meningitis (with headache, stiff neck) occurs in up to 15% of people with mumps, but usually resolves without any permanent damage.

Up to 50% of postpubertal males experience "orchitis," or testicular inflammation, as a complication of mumps. This may involve pain, swelling, nausea, vomiting, and fever, with tenderness of the area possibly lasting for weeks. Sterility is a rare complication, however.

An increase in spontaneous abortion (miscarriage) has been found among women who developed mumps during the first trimester of pregnancy; however, there is no evidence that mumps causes birth defects.

Deafness, in one or both ears, can occur in approximately one per 20,000 reported cases of mumps.

Is there a treatment for mumps?

There is no "cure" for mumps, only supportive treatment (bed rest, fluids, fever reduction).

How do I know if I/my child/my family member has mumps?

Mumps is diagnosed by a combination of symptoms and physical signs and laboratory confirmation of the virus, as not all cases develop characteristic parotitis and not all cases of parotitis are caused by mumps.

Adapted from *Immunization Action Coalition*

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How long is a person with mumps contagious?

The virus may be in saliva from 7 days before to 9 days after the start of swelling. It is most easily spread to others from 2 days before and 4 days after the onset of illness. People who are infected with the mumps virus but have mild illness or no symptoms can still pass the virus to others.

If I think I/my child/my family member has been exposed to mumps, what should I do?

If your child has not been vaccinated against mumps, receiving the vaccine after exposure to the virus will not help prevent disease if the child has already been infected. However, if the child did not become infected after this particular exposure, the vaccine will help protect him or her against future exposure to mumps. Persons born before 1957 have are more likely to have natural immunity from having had the disease, which was common when they were children. But mumps cases can occur in adults if they don't have immunity. Adults can be vaccinated against mumps to provide protection.

How common is mumps in the United States?

Due to good immunization coverage, mumps is now rare in the United States. An estimated 212,000 cases occurred in 1964, while only 258 cases were reported in 2004. However, outbreaks occasionally occur. Mumps virus is still present in the United States and the world, and the number of cases would quickly begin to climb if we were to stop vaccinating against this disease.

Can you get mumps more than once?

No.